

BIOGRAPHY

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A GLIMPSE OF RENAISSANCE MEDICINE.

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Augustine Birrell called Cellini's *Vita* or autobiography, 'A Rogue's Memoirs,' and with every right, for he had strong support from the author's text, which displays the extraordinary personality of the man upon the picturesque, if somewhat lurid background of Italy in the first half of the sixteenth century. This book, which breathes the authentic atmosphere of the later Italian Renaissance, was dictated when Cellini was about 58 years old. So the man talks, and we hear him down the centuries, exaggerating, bragging, boasting and swashbuckling; loudly justifying himself in all situations, explaining away lusts, natural and unnatural; thefts, manslaughter and murder; and, at all times of temporary misfortune, loudly crying to God to ease his unfortunate state: Cellini demoniac, hysterical, hallucinated, dabbling in necromancy and calling up devils; Cellini exultant, frightened, despairing, patronized by the powerful and living in luxury, or cast into dungeons by the same masters; Cellini the greatest goldsmith of all time, the author of one of the greatest autobiographies, who, despite all the vicissitudes inherent in the life of a genius and rascal, lived to be seventy and died peacefully in his bed, surrounded by the children of his last decade.

Benvenuto Cellini was born 'on a night of All Saints, following the feast-day' in the year 1500. He was a child of his father's later years, and though his parents were expecting a girl, the old man, when he saw his son, said, 'Let him be Welcome,' and so he got his name, Benvenuto. It was an extraordinarily interesting time to be born. Leonardo da Vinci, painter, philosopher, poet, engineer, and, according to William Hunter, the very best anatomist and physiologist of his time, was at his zenith. Michael Angelo, who had skill in fortifications as well as in frescoes and sonnets, was twenty-five, and Cellini was to know him as a friend. Berengario da Carpi, who was afterwards to meet Benvenuto, was thirty years old, no charlatan as he appears once in the memoirs, but an able surgeon and physician, a reviver of anatomical knowledge. Carpi was of the true spirit of the Renaissance and wrote a commentary on the 'Anathomie' of Mondino, after much experience in dissection. Indeed, such was his impersonal zeal for anatomical knowledge that he is said to have dissected two Spaniards alive. He was professor at Bologna and died at Ferrara in 1530. Strangely enough, although the great Vesalius

(1514-1564) lived the whole of his life within the span of Cellini's, he is not mentioned in the autobiography, yet his masterpiece '*De Fabrica Humani Corporis*,' that immortal work, as von Haller called it, was completed and printed in 1543, and still survives to rouse the bibliophilic enthusiasms of the Oslers and Cushings of our time. Which is only just, for it is one of the foundation stones of modern medicine as a science, sceptically reconsidering the statements of Galen and Aristotle and finding them sadly wanting; giving new accounts of bones, muscles and movements, and, for the times, the best description of the brain. At twenty-eight Vesalius had accomplished this, and by recording in drawings his observations of human architecture while dissecting, began to systematize the study of anatomy and redirect it on progressive lines.

Cellini's period is littered with great names in the history of medicine: Zerbi, Alessandro Achillini, Marc Antonio della Torre anatomizing at Bologna, Padua and other Italian universities; Guido Guidi (Vidius), of whom more later; Giovanni di Vigo, surgeon to Pope Julius II., who recommended mercury in syphilis, and regarded all unguents and powders, from 'red worms dried to powder or boiled up with oil,' to 'rust of brass,' as vain, without the addition of Quick Silver; Ambroise Paré, whose first experience of military surgery was in the Italian campaign of 1536, undertaken by Francois I. against the Duke of Milan. Chief of his art became Master Ambroise, and died surgeon to the King at the age of eighty. Among his many other services to medicine he is credited with having suspected flies to be vectors of infectious disease. It recalls the man if it risks banality to quote the famous inscription on his monument, '*Je le pansay; Dieu le guarit.*' There were others; Servetus, a fellow student of Vesalius, who had views on the aeration of blood in the lungs; Frascatorio, the Veronese physician who gave the modern name Syphilis to what was then known as the 'French Disease' and described typhus fever also; Gabrielle Falloppio (Fallopian), whose name is eponymous in anatomical nomenclature, and, to move to regions devoted to studies regarded as ancillary to medicine by the superstitious of all ages, Copernicus, physician as well as astronomer, whose revolutionary ideas appeared in the year of Vesalius's '*Fabrica*.'

Among this galaxy, reinforced by princes, statesmen, commanders and ecclesiastics, and some of the greatest painters of all time, Benvenuto Cellini lived his uproarious life in a turbulent age, and the only reason why he does not have much to say about any of them, except those who actually influenced his comings and goings, is because he was, as someone has said, such a 'symmetrical rascal,' and completely self-centred. His primary interest was always Benvenuto, his needs and desires and his art. He had no time for anything else. Benvenuto's interest in doctors and disease was chiefly from the point of view of a patient, but his memoirs abound in items of interest to students of medicine.

When he was a boy about five, his father Giovanni, playing the violin and singing by the fire, suddenly spied in the midst of the 'most burning flames a little creature like a lizard which was sporting in the core of the intensest coals.' Calling the boy and his sister, the old man pointed out this phenomenon, at the same time giving Benvenuto a buffet on the ear, not for any wrong he had done, but—so that he would remember that the lizard was a Salamander, 'a creature which has never been seen by any one of whom we have credible information.' It survives in heraldry, a four-legged creature surrounded by flames.

In early life Cellini probably had two attacks of malaria, one at Pisa when he was about 17, which sent him home to Florence. He says he was ill about two months. He evidently had fever on and off for some time, for he says, 'the fever never left me.' His father looked after him and had him treated. During his illness he amused himself by playing the flute. Soon after his recovery we find him alluding to cartoons made by Michael Angelo and Leonardo for the Palazzo Vecchio, and he strikes up a friendship with the grandson of Fra Lippo Lippi—'that most excellent painter'—of the pre-Raphaelite Renaissance, the subject of Browning's poem:—

'I am poor brother Lippo, by your leave!
You need not clap your torches in my face.'

Soon he is off to Rome, does successful work with Il Firenzuola, and his next reference of medical interest is to plague. He says that when he was about twenty-three 'there raged a plague of such extraordinary violence that many thousands died of it every day in Rome.' This rather scared him so he adopted amusements to keep him cheerful (not bad prophylaxis), and went shooting pigeons among the ancient monuments of the city. He found this exercise improved his health, because 'the open air was a benefit to my constitution.' Plague ravaged Italy and France in the first half of the sixteenth century and then spread over most of Europe. Its contagious nature was recognized.

It was about this time that he met Giacomo Berengario da Carpi, a surgeon of the highest renown, who, able man that he was, undertook the most desperate cases of the so-called 'French Disease.' 'In Rome,' says Benvenuto, 'this kind of illness is very partial to the priests, and especially to the richest of them.' Giacomo professed to work miracles by certain fumigations, but usually got his fee first. 'He was a great connoisseur in the arts of design,' writes Cellini, meaning no innuendo. He made him a couple of silver vases and was well paid. 'Berengario was a man of great sagacity, and did wisely to get out of Rome; for not many months afterwards all the patients he treated grew so ill that they were a hundred times worse off than before he came.' But he was not all charlatan for he was a pioneer in the treatment of gunshot wounds, and did a hysterectomy for prolapse. He also was one of the first to use

mercury for syphilis, which had been recommended by Giovanni di Vigo before 1514. Years later Cellini called him a charlatan and said he had paid very badly and had moreover injured the health of many noblemen and gentle folk with his filthy salves.

Plague in Rome dragged on many months, and although Cellini staved it off for long, he got it at last, after spending a night with the serving maid of a Bolognese prostitute, Faustina. Next morning he 'rose upon the hour of breaking fast, and felt tired, for I had travelled many miles that night, and was wanting to take food, when a crushing headache seized me; several swellings appeared on my left arm, together with a carbuncle which showed itself just beyond the palm of the left hand, where it joins the wrist.' He felt stifled at the heart and was certain he was a dead man. However, by the attentions of a friend and help of Cardinal Iacoacci's physician, he threw off the disease as his sores 'had not yet begun to stink,' and actually went out riding with the bubo plugged with lint under plaster. His account of the feelings of a plague stricken man (if it really was plague) and his sixteenth century doctor's comments are detailed and interesting. He recuperated at Civita Vecchia. This was about 1523. Of course he went to the wars in 1527 when the trouble between Charles V. and Francis I. involved the Italian States. He behaved characteristically, took charge of some artillery in the Castle of San Angelo, nearly killed Cardinals Farnese and Salviati accidentally, and later claimed to have fired the arquebuse that killed the Constable of Bourbon when he attacked Rome. He unmounted the Pope's jewels, melted down the settings to save them, and then went to Mantua.

Here he had his second attack of malaria. He caught a quartan fever and was thrown into delirium at each access of the fever. He was making the Pontifical Seal for Cardinal Gonzala at the time, but the fever made him curse Mantua. After four months he got away, had a slight relapse of fever on the journey, but reached Florence, only to find that his father and all the people in the house had died of plague. Only his sister, and, as he found later, his brother, survived.

We follow the trail to Rome. Here in the workshop of Raffaello del Moro, he found the daughter of the house with a disorder of the right hand which 'ate into the two bones belonging to the little finger and the next.' A quack predicted crippling of the whole arm. Cellini called in Maestro Giacomo of Perugia, an excellent physician and surgeon, but observing that the surgeon's tools were not up to much, there and then made in his own workshop, 'a little scalping-iron of steel, extremely thin and curved; it cut like a razor.' With this a sequestrum was extracted. Giacomo was of opinion that the condition would clear up with only residual weakness of the affected fingers. This famous man was surgeon to several Popes up to his death in 1566. Not every surgeon has a Cellini to fashion his scalpels.

Breathlessly the memoirs go on. Benvenuto's brother Cecchino, after assassinating a constable, is shot in the leg above the right knee by an arquebusier in the brawl that ensued. He ultimately bled to death, after delirium due to loss of blood. Evidently Paré's re-introduction of the ligature was not known to those attending. He was avenged, for Cellini deliberately murdered the arquebusier later on. Homicide was a venial sin in the lusty days of the Renaissance.

While working for Pope Clement in Bologna he got inflammation of the eyes, which was so painful that he 'could scarce go on living for torment.' The trouble appeared to be so serious that he thought he would lose his eyesight. Cataracts descended on his eyes, he writes. The Pope evidently believed he was malingering and was annoyed that the work couldn't go on. Indeed he irascibly and metaphorically called the work *cipollata*, 'a stew of onions,' meaning a hotch potch. However, Benvenuto got somewhat better and was advised to take a purge and then to bathe his eyes with an infusion of corn-flowers—stalk, blossom, root, together. He was soon better. It is doubtful what this ophthalmia was that could be eased with corn-flower water. There are no other complaints of eye trouble in the memoirs, except one of injury. But he starts the next chapter, 'It was true that I had got the sickness; but I believe I caught it from that fine young servant girl whom I was keeping when my house was robbed. The 'French Disease,' for it was that, remained in me more than four months dormant before it showed itself and then broke out over my whole body at one instant.' He goes on to describe swellings or 'blisters,' half an inch in diameter and rose coloured. The signs and symptoms were not typical and the doctors would not call it 'French Disease,' nor did their methods cure the patient. So at last Cellini decided to take what he calls the 'wood,' *lignum vitae* or *lignum sanctum*, against their advice. This was *guaiacum*, useless for syphilis, but recommended for that purpose by Ulrich von Hutten early in the sixteenth century. After fifty days he was cured. The description of the rash sounds more like one of urticaria, or perhaps of an erythema, but what of the eyes? Some time after, he went shooting to 'mend my shattered health,' and being exposed to wind and water and living in marshy country, fell sicker than before, of a fever, perhaps malaria. However, *guaiacum* again cured him, against doctors' orders.

The question arises; did Cellini ever acquire syphilis? He had plenty of opportunity and did not neglect it, but he seems to have lived to a healthy old age. He married when over sixty and before his death at seventy had several healthy children. In old age his worst ailment appears to have been something like gout. Syphilis usually sends in its bills before the seventh decade.

About this time Cellini falls in love with Angelica, a Sicilian girl, perhaps the one genuine passion of his life. But he loses her for awhile

and hears she is back in Sicily. So he takes to necromancy with a Sicilian priest and together they go to the Coliseum. The priest draws magic 'circles on the earth, with the finest ceremonies that can be imagined'; the incantations last one and a half hours amid burning incense and foetid drugs like asafoetida. 'Several legions appeared, and the Coliseum was all full of devils.' They tried raising Hell a second time and ultimately succeeded in stimulating their imaginations so much 'that the most dangerous of all the denizens of Hell' appeared, striving to force their way into the magic circles. Benvenuto went home and dreamed all night of devils. He had demanded of the devils to be united with his Angelica. The necromancer gave the devils' reply that he would be, in a month—and so he was, to the day.

Soon after this Cellini quarrelled with and killed Pompeo, a Milanese jeweller. This put him in bad odour for awhile and his arrest by the Bargello (Chief Constable) was attempted, which frightened him so much that he called a doctor and demanded to be bled. The doctor laughed at him and told him he had been frightened, recommending a cup of wine. He got a pardon for Pompeo's murder, being protected by Cardinals Cornara and de' Medici and later by Cardinal Farnese (Paul III.), but shortly afterwards fell ill with a violent fever. This appears to be his worst attack of malaria. He took to his bed feeling he was going to die, and called the best doctors in Rome, including Francesco da Norcia, a physician of great age and considerable repute. He was physician to the Popes Adrian VII., Clement VII. and Paul III., of distinguished reputation, and he grew very rich on their bounty. Benvenuto told him what he thought the cause of his illness (*i.e.*, his recent fright) and said that he had wished to be let blood, but Maestro Francesco was against it and treated him otherwise; so he got worse and after eight days the physicians despaired of his life. He became delirious and fancied Charon was at his bedside trying to drag him into his boat. He became comatose for some hours, and his attendants, having used all the doctors' remedies, went for the doctor himself, who was wrath, saying that though he was sorry about it; 'Do you imagine that if I were to come with my medicine I could blow breath up through his guts and bring him back to life for you?' But he sent oil to anoint the patient's pulses and heart. It seemed hopeless and they began to prepare his shroud, when he recovered consciousness. Francesco came and practised polypharmacy by prescribing 'perfumes, lotions, unctions, plasters and a heap of other precious things.' Meanwhile, says Cellini, I came to life by means of 'more than twenty leeches applied to my buttocks.' The doctor now called four or five times a day bringing fresh remedies, for Benvenuto was slow in recovering. However, the banks of the Styx had receded, and a little later he drank about a quart of water against orders, began to sweat and fell asleep. Soon he was ordered to the hills, and no sooner was he there than

he began to vomit, 'during which there came from my stomach a hairy worm about a quarter of a cubit in length; the hairs were long and the worm was very ugly, speckled of divers colours, green, black and red.' This was kept and shown to the doctor, who, after saying he had never seen anything like it before, remarked to the friends, 'Now, take care of your Benvenuto, for he is cured.' But he was some weeks before he was fully restored. Malaria from the Pontine marshes could be very virulent, even when masquerading as a multi-coloured hairy worm.

Benvenuto, now and then, found that his employers among the rulers of the land 'did not hold him in the same esteem as formerly,' his faithful service having been besmirched by lying tongues; 'and also because I feared lest those who had the power should play me some worse trick.' On one of these occasions he set out for France, had audience with the king at Fontainebleau and followed the court to Lyons. By the time they got there he had developed a 'slow fever' and his apprentice Ascanio a 'quartan fever.' Benvenuto's stomach was disordered and he soon had a great longing for Italy, that he might die there rather than in France. He was soon depressed, like all of his psychological make-up, and self-pity followed quickly. Back again in Italy he was imprisoned by Pope Paul III. Francis I. demanded him of the Pope as being a king's man, but, alas, although Cellini escaped, very soon the Pope got him again. In escaping, he broke his leg three inches above the heel. There was much bleeding, so apparently it was a compound fracture. Cardinal Cornaro succoured him and Maestro Jacomo of Perugia, 'the first physician in Rome,' set the bone and bled the patient with his own hand. Benvenuto's veins were so swollen that the 'blood sprang forth so copiously and spurted with such force into his (the surgeon's) face, that he had to abandon the operation. He regarded this as a very bad omen and would hardly be prevailed upon to undertake my cure.' Cellini was indeed a full blooded rascal and the doctor ran some risk of the Pope's displeasure in treating him at all. But he made a good job of it and the limb certainly did not appear to hamper Benvenuto's agility in future. Italian surgery was in good repute at this time; its practitioners certainly had opportunity for a good deal of practice in traumatic surgery in both civil and military life. The Cardinal interceded with the Pope for Benvenuto and at first his Eminence seemed disposed to be lenient, but a little later, in 1539, poor Benvenuto was seized again, his leg still in splints, and thrown into the dungeons of the Castle of Sant' Angelo, which 'was full of spiders and venomous worms.' Black depression came over him. He read his Bible and had gloomy thoughts of suicide. He began to have visions of angels. He prayed a lot, and dreamed the most pleasant dreams. His nails grew so long that he could not touch his body without wounding it. His teeth began to perish in his mouth, the dead teeth pushed out by the living ones; 'Very many did I lose this way.' Could it be that Cellini got scurvy,

or a Renaissance variety of trench gum? While lying sick and helpless like this, he had a vision of the sun which he described with tremendous vigour and ecstatic fervour. He saw the Christ and the Madonna clothed in a golden aura of blinding brilliance and colour, and supported by angels. The language in which he described the glories of the sun reaches uncommon heights of word-painting and is perhaps the most outstanding example in his book of his apparently unconscious power of astonishingly vivid description. He was much afraid that he was to be thrown down the oubliette, that convenient repository for inconvenient people in a more graceless age. But he was brought out of his dungeon and next feared he was to be slowly poisoned with pounded diamond mixed in his food. He felt 'his victuals scrunch beneath his teeth,' detected the diamond powder, and thought he would die. Actually the melodramatic rogue was in no such danger, for the person entrusted with the diamond to pound for his death, had purloined it, and substituted a beryl—a cheap greenish one—gritty, but soft and harmless. He owed his release from the Pope's clutches to Cardinal d'Este of Ferrara, who later set out to see Francis I. of France and took Benvenuto with him. On the way Cellini suffered from the unwholesome air, and the indisposition was cured by the strange diet of wild peacocks which furnished 'meat of such quality, that we shook our sickness off.' Ultimately by roundabout ways, to avoid molestation, he got to the French Court. He went by Mont Cenis, to avoid the minions of the Duke of Ferrara, or perhaps from fear of plague in Milan. Francis I. became his patron and began well by allowing him 700 gold crowns a year, the same as Leonardo. Although working for the King and designing candelabra with his usual magnificence, he is soon in trouble again through offending the King's mistress Madame d'Etampes, who did her best to harm him. He is protected by the Queen of Navarre, Francis's sister, and by Henry the Dauphin.

It is at this period in the autobiography that we come across his friend Guido Guidi (called Vidijs), whom indeed Benvenuto says he ought to have mentioned before; 'an able physician and doctor of medicine and a nobleman of Florence.' Guido went to France some time prior to 1542, for in that year he was created first professor of medicine in the Royal College and physician to Francis I. He was a great friend of Cellini, who wrote that the story of his life would be incomplete without him. Guido acted as god-father to Cellini's illegitimate daughter by one of his models, 'the first child,' Benvenuto naively adds, 'I ever had, so far as I remember.' Guido returned to Italy in 1548 and was professor at Pisa at one time. He was an anatomist of note and his name, Vidijs, still endures in the names of the artery and nerve of the pterygoid canal.

While Cellini was in Paris the very dubious episode with Caterina occurs. This revolting revelation of perversion is ignored or lightly touched upon by Cellini's translators. The vigorous, heterosexual rascal

occasionally, in all probability lapsed, either from choice or curiosity. He was imprisoned on a charge of unnatural vice in 1556, but he protested his innocence. It was all quite in keeping with the loose manner of the times so well reflected in the works of Bandello and Aretino.

In due course Benvenuto, restless and thwarted, got tired of the cantrips of Madame d'Étampes and the King, and besides, his murderous attack on the plaintiff in a lawsuit had made him unpopular, so he asked and got leave to return to Italy. Near Lyons he meets with a devastating hail-storm which his later memory, heightened by imagination, conjures into a magnificent natural display. Hailstones as big as lemons: Benvenuto began to sing the Miserere when a bigger stone fell on his horse's head and stunned him. They were pounded black and blue; cattle were killed in the fields and the trees stripped of their branches. Anything Cellini sees, or thinks he sees, loses nothing in his description. His striking picture of the aurora borealis he saw on the road to Rome is one instance—a huge beam of fire; and the portent was duly noted; a Medici was murdered a few days later. And again, after his visions in Sant' Angelo, he observed that his shadow had a halo, seen best in the morning on the wet grass when the air was clear and free from mist; a phenomenon not unknown to physicists. He probably regarded this as a sign from Heaven of his special qualities. But it marks acute observation.

Finally he returned to Florence where he undertook for Cosimo de' Medici his famous statue of Perseus with the Gorgon's Head. He did a bust of the Medici also. He records that he suffered in the loins about this time and was unable to work hard. This ailment may have been lumbago, or something else. A little later he loses a natural son at the age of two, who was smothered by his nurse, presumably by accident. This was a great sorrow to him, but not for long; life was too urgent.

While working for the Duke of Florence and repairing a statue of Narcissus, he was getting his chisels in order when a fragment of steel flew in his right eye and embedded so deeply in the cornea that it could not be removed. He thought he would lose his sight, but after some days he sent for Maestro Raffaeallo de' Pilli, the surgeon, who cured him in an extraordinary way. He put Benvenuto on his back on a table, and, taking two pigeons, opened the large veins under their wings so that the blood gushed into his eye. He was relieved at once, and in two days the splinter came away. Strange treatment, but there was virtue in pigeon's blood; drawn from under the right wing it was a remedy of Montaigne's doctors. Benvenuto, grateful for this ophthalmological miracle, made a gold eye against the feast of St. Lucia, and presented it at her shrine.

Now we come to one of the last of Cellini's passages of vivid description, the account of the casting of his masterpiece, the Perseus. The labour and difficulty of casting such a large piece in a single mould must have been enormous. It was a long job requiring tiresome attention.

The furnace gave him trouble ; the shop went on fire and the roof was in danger of caving in. Wind-driven rain got in and added to the trouble. He ran about so much and for so long, and expended so much nervous energy without seeing success, that he threw himself into a violent fever, and took to his bed raving and calling out incessantly ' I feel that I am dying.' His friends sought to cheer him, but it was no good. Now he probably saw another apparition, for a crooked man, his body bent into the shape of an S, came to his bedside like those who give spiritual comfort to the condemned, and croaked that all his work was spoiled, and he had done with this world. This provided the stimulus. Benvenuto leapt up in rage and rushed into his workshop, got a load of oak to fuel his furnace, hurled all his own pewter vessels, more than two hundred, into the melting, fell on his knees and prayed loudly, and at last, after hours of anxiety, was rewarded by the bronze melting and flowing into his mould.

He slept quietly that night after supping with relish. He had no fever. As there were no thermometers in those days we cannot know the quality of Cellini's fevers. This one seems to have been due to maniacal hysteria caused by the intense excitement engendered by the occasion, though one wonders if the fumes from his erratic furnace and the burning metal may not have played a part. For vivid description of frustrated genius in labour with a masterpiece, the torrent of words our author brings to the description of this task is worth reading.

Towards the end of this autobiography Cellini records that he was negotiating the purchase of a farm on lease for the rest of his natural life from a relative of his celebrated friend Guido Guidi. This relation of the great anatomist, who got a good many crowns out of Benvenuto, treated him with much less friendliness, for he asked him to his house and gave him a meal, with a dose of corrosive sublimate in the sauce. Cellini could not guess why he was so pressed to eat, but he discovered later after supper when he was three miles on his way home to his farm of Trespiano. He felt his stomach burn dreadfully, and had such pain that it was with difficulty he reached home. The whole night his bowels were violently disordered. His brain felt on fire, and he began to recollect the circumstances of the meal and suspected sublimate poisoning, with the symptoms of which he seemed to be familiar. His intestines were corroded and his bowels burnt up. He had melaena and was so overpowered that after a few days he had to go to bed. He says nothing about anuria, so we may be sure he did not notice this. Nor does he mention salivation. He was saved by Francesco di Montevarchi, physician, and relative of Benedetto of that name, to whom Cellini sent the first draft of his book, and by the surgeon, Raffaello de' Pilli. What the surgeons' part was exactly is not stated, but the victim says he was unable to retain his stools. These doctors attended him for six months. Montevarchi suggested that the cause might have been a venomous caterpillar, but Pilli said ' I can tell you, Benvenuto,

that you swallowed a good mouthful of sublimate.' 'Don't I know it?' replied in effect Benvenuto. It was a year before he recovered his vigour, and he certainly made a remarkable recovery, for the fatal dose of sublimate is small. Ultimately he thought that the poison had worked so well that it had lengthened his expectation of life by bettering his constitution: for which he returned thanks to God. Probably the sublimate was impure, but after this illness he was never quite so vigorous again.

In his later years, according to his principal translator, he suffered from many maladies, the worst of which was probably gout. He carried the memoirs to the autumn of 1562 and the death of Cardinal Giovanni rather mysteriously while hunting in the Pisan Marshes. Poison was suspected as usual, but his brother Don Garcia died a little later. There was a miasma prevalent at that time styled 'l'influenza' by Cosimo I., in a letter of the period. Then Cellini says, 'I allowed a few days to elapse . . . and then I betook myself to Pisa.' So ends one of the best autobiographies ever written; an adventure story more thrilling and amusing than many a work of fiction. Benvenuto epitomised in himself the spirit of the later Renaissance in Italy and displayed in his life most of its qualities, good and evil. One inevitably compares and contrasts him with that other great Florentine of this period, the crafty Machiavelli; both representative in different spheres of the flowering talent of the times. Conscience troubled neither of them. Cellini killed with his dagger; Machiavelli, brilliant exponent of power politics by successful assassins, murdered with his pen. Both wrought masterpieces. Machiavelli broke all the commandments, Cellini all but the first. Cellini was a neuropath, a conceited bravo of exaggerated sensibilities who swept tumultuously through life: who ruffled it, dagger half drawn, inebriated by the explosive energy of his tremendous creative vitality. Sensitive to the enchantments of form and design, he scattered masterpieces of goldsmith's work in his headlong path, and equally insolence and provocation, frequently leading to bloodshed and violence, in a society where crimes of violence and acts of cruelty and treachery were common. His book contains a good deal that is of medical interest. The man himself in his revelations, conscious and unconscious, is a psychological study. His careless, thumb-nail sketches of the principal actors of his world as they impinged upon his life are masterly in their brief dismissal—for Cellini was only interested in Benvenuto. Such account as he gives of the methods of diagnosis and treatment, still smothered by an accumulated burden of credulity and belief in astrology and magic, clearly shows the primitive state of medicine in the sixteenth century. There were hordes of wandering quacks of no discernible status, and the true light was sought by few. Obviously there was some notion that certain diseases were contagious, but the advance of internal medicine lagged noticeably behind surgery which received impetus from the revival of dissection of

the human body and the consequent increase of anatomical knowledge. Cellini seemed to have got on very well with his doctors, though he disobeyed their orders as often as not. Their excellence is often, one feels, rather a reflection of the patient's magnificence ; his doctors would have to be the very best.

It is curious that there seems to be no awareness on Cellini's part that he was living in an era of great anatomists, for men like Leonardo and Michael Angelo made use of dissections, and Vesalius's ' *Fabrica* ' could hardly have escaped his notice. Something he must have learned from this friend Guidi (Vidius), but all the same, although a knowledge of anatomy was a necessity for his work, neither in his Perseus, whose body seems heavily over-muscled, nor in his elongated conventional female figures, particularly the Nymph of Fontainebleau, does he demonstrate complete mastery of external anatomical architecture. He certainly did not realise the evolutionary value of the work going on around him ; but then he was part of the scene and a leading actor on the stage, and was never one to sit in the audience.

Sometime after 1562 he married and despite his racketty life and the supposed attack of the French disease, contrived to father five children in his last decade, a son being born to him in his sixty-ninth year. It is true two of them died in infancy, but this is no more than an indication of the infantile mortality of the age, and no reflection on Benvenuto. He died, probably of pneumonia, early in 1571, and was buried with suitable pomp in the Church of the Annunziata in Florence, a few months before Don John of Austria burst the battle-line at Lepanto.

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